



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



No. 5 — September 24, 2009

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Don Toth, Chair
Moosomin

Dan D'Autremont
Cannington

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Meadow Lake

Hon. Don Morgan
Saskatoon Southeast

Mr. Len Taylor
The Battlefords

Mr. Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 8 Legislative Building
3:00 p.m., September 24, 2009

Present:**Members of the Board of Internal Economy**

Hon. Don Toth, Speaker, Chair
Hon. Don Morgan
Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Mr. Dan D'Autremont
Ms. Doreen Eagles
Mr. Kevin Yates

Staff to the Board

Mr. Gregory Putz, Clerk
Mr. Ken Ring, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel
Ms. Marilyn Borowski, Director of Financial and Administrative Services
Ms. Irene Bauer, Acting Secretary to the Board

Witnesses to the Board

Mr. Tim McMillan, Chair of Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies
Ms. Iris Lang, Principal Clerk
Ms. Melissa Bennett, Legislative Librarian

AGENDA

Moved by Ms. Eagles, seconded by Minister Morgan, that the proposed agenda be adopted.
Agreed.

MINUTES

Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Mr. Yates, ordered, that the Minutes of Meeting #4/09 be adopted. Agreed.

ITEM 1**Decision Item: Consideration and Approval for costs associated with Assembly order of reference to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies**

Moved by Minister Morgan, seconded by Minister Harrison, ordered:

That the board approve the request for \$100,400 for the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies Inquiry.

The Question being put, it was agreed.

Minute #1726

ITEM 2**Discussion/Decision Item: Consideration of Special Warrant request for Assembly unforeseen expenses**

The board meet in camera to discuss the consideration of Special Warrant Request for Assembly unforeseen expenses.

The Board continued in closed session at 3:20 p.m.

The Board concluded its in-camera deliberations. On the Motion of Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Ms. Eagles that the meeting resume in open camera. Agreed.

The Board resumed Public Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

On Motion of Minister Morgan, seconded by Minister Harrison, ordered:

That, for the 2009-10 fiscal year, special warrant funding in the amount of \$65,000, be approved for Vote 021 – Legislative Assembly.

Question being put, it was agreed.

Minute #1727

Item 3

Decision item: Adoption of Board of Internal Economy steering committee recommendation for Capital Asset Disposal Policy

Moved by Minister Morgan, seconded by Mr. Yates, ordered:

That, the *Members' Capital Asset Disposal Authorization* policy and the *Members' Disposal Certification* form, as attached, be approved.

Question being put, it was agreed.

Minute #1728

Moved by Mr. D'Autremont, seconded by Mr. Yates, that the meeting adjourn.

The Board adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

[The board met at 15:00.]

The Chair: — Members, guests, I'll call our meeting to order. The members have in front of them the agenda for today, and I'll just mention that when we get to item 2, the consideration of special warrant, I'm going to ask for the committee to go in camera for a motion at that time.

So may I have a motion to approve the agenda as presented? Moved by Ms. Eagles. And a seconder? Minister Morgan. And we're all agreed? Agreed. Carried. Thank you.

You also have in front of you the minutes of our last meeting of May the 22nd, '09. Can I have a motion to accept the minutes as presented? I have a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. D'Autremont. Have a seconder for that? Mr. Yates. Thank you. Any questions arising from . . . Seeing none, and we're all agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Thank you.

We're going to move forward then to our first decision item, and that's a funding request in regards to committee work, the Committee of Crown Corporations. And we have with us the Chair of the Committee of Crown Corporations, Mr. McMillan, and we have Iris with us. And maybe we could turn it over to them and the reasons for the additional funds that we're looking for this afternoon in order to cover the work of the committee. I'll recognize Iris. Thank you.

Ms. Lang: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you're aware, the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies did receive an order of reference from the legislature back in April. You have before you, I just passed out an amended version of the decision item. The steering committee met back in August to make some decisions surrounding the order of reference and how the committee would be proceeding in the future with the order of reference.

Further to that then, the full committee met on September 9. There were some decisions made at that particular committee meeting. They agreed to nine days of hearings for the order of reference. At that time I did put together a budget based on those numbers, and now the amended one that you have before you is based on some things that have been in the media as of late that there will be further hearings. And I would also like to advise the board that a meeting notice will be going out shortly to the committee members that the committee will be meeting on Tuesday morning to discuss additional days and locations for the committee to meet.

So initially when the committee asked me to come up with the budget, my request to the committee was going to be \$40,000 with a total budget of 100,400. But given the meeting that's coming up on Tuesday — that there will be additional days added, and that the committee will likely be travelling outside of Regina — I thought it only prudent that I ask for additional funds.

Now I did extrapolate based on what I believed could

potentially happen with the committee meeting on Tuesday, but of course those decisions have to be made by the committee. But I think the budget that I've presented should be adequate to meet the needs of what I believe the committee will do.

Some of the issues that, if you're looking at the initial \$100,000, why it's a little bit higher, not all of the costs can be absorbed by the committee. When the committee's budget was approved by this board, there was only adequate funds for two public hearings in Regina. As you're aware, Bill 80 has had public hearings in Regina. So there's a large advertising component to that. And now with this order of reference and the committee travelling, there is not sufficient funds in the global committee's budget to meet the needs.

So you have before you what I believe will be the needs of the committee to go forward with this inquiry. And I believe the Chair of our committee has some comments as well.

The Chair: — Yes. I recognize Mr. McMillan.

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you. My comments are just maybe to clarify. As we move forward in this process, we've met in the past, passed resolutions, and Iris prepared a budget for that. Following the first meeting of our committee, the Perrins report came out, and the government members on that committee put forward a recommendation into the media of possibly extending those. The opposition responded also in the media, and I thank Iris for taking note of both — of the back and forth that's going on not actually in the committee and putting these numbers together.

As Chair, though, I just would like to point out that so far the committee as a whole has not met to discuss what both parties have been discussing publicly, but the committee itself hasn't voted on a motion. So I don't want the perception to be that we're getting ahead of the game with this proposal. This proposal is being brought forward possibly to expedite it, but I just want the board to know that the Crowns committee has some work left to do. And we leave it at the Board of Internal Economy's discretion whether it's appropriate to go with the full figure or just with what has been passed by the Committee of Crown and Central Agencies. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. McMillan. And before I open the floor for questions, the matter was brought to my attention as we're planning for today's meeting. And I also had suggested to Iris that we indeed look at any circumstances that may be over and above, and rather than coming in short and having to call another board meeting to approve it so that the committee could meet, that Iris look extensively at potential costs and come forward with a budget that would be more reflective of what the costs might turn out to be.

And mindful of the fact that if the committee doesn't meet as much as it originally had planned, the only expenditures would be for those actual days. And if the committee hearings come in less than what the figure of 254 that's kind of being budgeted now, based on what has transpired, at least the committee will know that they've got the funding to move forward. So I'm opening the floor for questions. Minister Morgan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Is it open to us to go ahead with the process with the existing budget and make a determination as we enter into the hearings to see what kind of public interest there is, or what kind of public uptake there might be on day three or day five, the number of people that have contacted us . . . [inaudible] . . . I'm loath to commit a large amount of money when we don't know how much uptake there is.

There's been some discussion that there may be more public interest than what we think there might be, but we don't know how much, how much there is. So I'm wondering whether we could just adopt a cautious approach, set out on it, and then see what the number of people that make written presentations and whether there's a strong likelihood that we're going to have a lot of people that want to make an oral presentation.

The Chair: — I'll defer to either Mr. McMillan or Ms. Lang.

Mr. McMillan: — Yes. Maybe I should expand upon the process, if that would be helpful. To this point our committee is committed to nine days commencing on October 6, I believe. At that we will be doing hearings in Saskatoon, Regina, and La Ronge, also accepting written submissions from anyone who would like to submit to the committee.

What has been put forward publicly but has not been passed by the committee would be a second round of nine days, that an interim report would come out after the first nine, and several other locations would be around the province as well.

I guess what I struggle with to put forward to the board to decide on is whether you go ahead with the budget for the first nine days, which is the motion that's been brought forward, or the eighteen days which has been put forward publicly but has not been voted on by the Crowns and Central Agency Committee as a whole. And Iris has the solid numbers on both the nine and the publicly but not voted on 18.

The Chair: — Yes, Ms. Lang.

Ms. Lang: — One of the issues that I'm struggling with as well is there's not funds in place for basically accommodation and travel. I've put off some of these businesses till tomorrow. I need to sign contracts. There are arrangements to be made, so I need at least some money to go forward. If there is expectation to do something in the future — in January, for example — I would need at some point approval from the board for adequate funds in order to sign these contracts as well.

The Chair: — Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Well I have some concerns in approving any amount of money when we don't know what we're approving it for. We do know that the committee at one point was looking at nine days. Now we've heard publicly musings from the Premier of 18 days.

As you know, the official opposition believes that this should be quite more substantial than even 18 days of hearings. And until there's some agreement as to what we're doing, what would we be approving — and I think that we could reconvene a week from now, once the Crown corporations committee has met — once we know what we're dealing with and deal with factual

numbers versus dealing with an unknown at this point, and I would strongly suggest that that would be more appropriate than approving something we don't know what it's going to be.

[15:15]

The Chair: — Well just in response to Mr. Yates's comments, beginning next Tuesday, as the Speaker and the Clerk and I will be away for an international conference, so the challenge that Iris has and the committee may have is . . . Your meeting I believe it's next . . . or it's tomorrow is it — your Crowns meeting?

Ms. Lang: — Tuesday.

The Chair: — Tuesday, okay. That meeting would come, we're already away, and then all of a sudden . . . The importance is that the committee needs to have at least significant funds so certain contracts can be arranged and the funding is in place.

It doesn't look good for us to not approve sufficient . . . and then the committee's left without the funds and holding people off. And then that doesn't put a good light on the committee and its ability to move forward by having to ask hotels or the transportation companies, you're going to have to wait for your money because we don't have sufficient funds. So I think members need to be aware of that, that whatever approval is made should at least give sufficient funds so that Ms. Lang and the committee are not left kind of in limbo and holding people off on contracts that they need to move forward with. Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess my suggestion would be that we move forward on the context of having nine days. You know, if there are additional days, we're talking about January I think for those additional meetings. We're going to be convening again as a board obviously before that point, and we can consider further allocation at that point.

The Chair: — Mr. McMillan.

Mr. McMillan: — If I could answer to the last two speakers. I had discussed with Iris earlier in the week and to be honest, that is what I felt was likely to be coming forward. I think the Committee of Crown and Central Agencies has put forward a motion which we are committed to — nine days starting October 6 — that I think we can with all assuredness move forward on.

And I agree with the last speaker, Mr. Harrison, that the second round of meetings wouldn't be till January. And there would be sufficed lots of time to have the Board of Internal Economy meet for any expansion from what has already been passed.

The Chair: — So given those comments, Mr. McMillan, what amount of funds — I guess I can direct this to Iris — would be needed today to ensure that Iris is not caught in a position of having to kind of skate a little bit when she's trying to finalize contracts with suppliers for some of the services that you'd be requiring?

Ms. Lang: — Mr. Speaker, the total amount would be 100,400 with a special warrant request of \$40,000. How that transpires is, in my budget, I am able to absorb the advertising costs. Hansard would be able to absorb their costs. And as a result, the additional funding of \$40,000 is what the committee would require to meet the needs for the October period.

The Chair: — So if I heard you correctly, Iris, 40,000 is basically what you would need over and above what's already available to you through the Legislative Assembly?

Ms. Lang: — Correct. That would be the special warrant request amount. The total budget request for the inquiry, for this portion of the inquiry would be 100,400.

The Chair: — You'd need \$100,400?

Ms. Lang: — That's the budget, whereas the special warrant request is the \$40,000.

The Chair: — Then do I have a motion to move a special warrant of \$40,000 from the board to enable the committee to proceed with their work?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Agreed. Do you want to move a motion?

The Chair: — I need a motion.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sure. I'll make a motion that . . .

The Chair: — So Minister Morgan has moved that we approve forty . . .

Do I have a seconder to the motion by Minister Morgan to approve the 40,000? So we have a motion by Minister Morgan that the board approve the request for 100,400 for the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies inquiry. Do I have a seconder to that motion? Minister Harrison seconds it.

Any further discussion? Do we have agreement?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Thank you.

What we will do rather than moving forward, I indicated earlier before we got into items two and three that the committee should possibly move in camera. I wonder if we could have a motion to move in camera at this time.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — So moved.

The Chair: — Mr. Morgan has moved that the committee now move in camera.

[The board continued in camera.]

The Chair: — Okay. So we have a motion for special warrant funding. Do I have a mover to the motion? Minister Morgan.

[16:00]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I will move:

That for the 2009-2010 fiscal year, special warrant funding in the amount of \$65,000 be approved for vote 021 of the Legislative Assembly.

The Chair: — Do I have a seconder to that motion? Minister Harrison. Do we have any questions? Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put on the record a number of concerns that the opposition would have about this special warrant funding.

I'd like to start by indicating that the funding for the Crown Corporations Committee, in their hearings around the province for the people of Saskatchewan, is inadequate. We have nine days. We've had the Premier talk about the need for considerable more days. Originally the opposition members of the committee looked at a process that would give the people of Saskatchewan the opportunity to have meaningful consultations in looking at the issue of the energy needs of our province moving forward in a very thorough way. I don't see this funding doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, I have concerns about our failing to fund the library. This project will only increase in costs moving forward. It was a project that was approved with the intent of dealing with a long-term problem of the Legislative Assembly, a problem that members of this committee recognized some months ago. And it is known that the costs of construction in the province of Saskatchewan has risen quite considerably. And for a mere \$50,000, not to finish the project I think is unfortunate. So, Mr. Speaker, with those comments I conclude my remarks.

The Chair: — Any further comments to the motion? The question, all those in agreement with the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Those opposed? The motion carries.

We have one further item before the committee, and that is the members' capital asset disposal policy. And with Marilyn with us, do we have any questions in regards to this policy? Maybe I could ask Marilyn just to bring us up to speed on where we are, what the information that we have in front of us in regards to the capital asset policy agreement.

Ms. Borowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Essentially what this policy does is help both members and the Legislative Assembly Service have a more efficient, cost-effective way of disposing of capital assets that either members no longer need, don't require them anymore, or they're no longer operational or they're obsolete.

The policy up until this one was that members really had to bring everything back to Regina, and then the Legislative Assembly branch took care of doing the disposal of the items. But that really wasn't very efficient, nor was it very cost-effective in that if we had to send someone out to pick out the larger items, pick up the larger items, then there was cost to do that, if we had to bring them back to Regina and then store them until we had assembled enough that we could put them on

the CBO [community-based organization] disposal. Or if members had to wait for somebody to come pick them up, then they were being forced to store them in their constituency offices.

So what we're hoping with this is that this will provide a way for members to dispose of capital assets which will be much more efficient and cost-effective than the previous disposal method that we had. And this will allow members essentially to donate these assets to organizations within their communities and, in the case of assets that are really just junk, to be able to throw them away without having to bring them into Regina and leave it up to Legislative Assembly staff to dispose of them.

The Chair: — Thank you, Marilyn. And any questions? Minister Morgan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, this policy was reviewed and crafted with a good deal of care by this committee. It strikes a balance between the need for public accountability and transparency in dealing with taxpayers' dollars and expenditures of taxpayers' dollars, and also recognizing that things like coffee makers or small items do become obsolete or unfunctional after a period of time.

So it allows for a good process to allow for things that no longer have a significant value to be disposed of in an appropriate fashion, and ensures that the items that are of value are maintained and adequately inventoried and protected, bearing in mind that these things were purchased with taxpayer dollars. So I think it's a policy that we put forward — not just as a policy of the government, but as a policy of all members — that the public can look at and see, yes, the members in the Assembly are doing a good job and a competent job of ensuring that they are good stewards of public resources.

The Chair: — Further comments? Yes, Mr. Yates.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I concur with my colleague's earlier remarks about this policy. It's been in the works for some time, and it is a policy that's been examined in great detail and is in both the best interest of public accountability and cost-efficiencies. So, Mr. Speaker, I think we should proceed with this policy.

The Chair: — Any further comments? Seeing none, can I have a motion then to move forward and accept the capital asset disposal policy, members?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — So moved.

The Chair: — And a seconder? Mr. Yates. Are members in agreement with this motion? And I will read the motion moved by Mr. Morgan, seconded by Mr. Yates:

That the members' capital asset disposal policy included in the members' capital asset disposal authorization form and the members' disposal certification form as attached be approved.

We all agree?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. Thank you.

Any further business before the committee that members have? If not, can I have a motion to adjourn? Mr. D'Autremont. A seconder? Mr. Yates.

This committee stands adjourned. I thank the members for their attendance and contribution to the debate this afternoon.

[The board adjourned at 16:10.]